

**MINUTES**

**Virginia Cave Board  
Saturday, November 3, 2007  
Luray Caverns, Luray, Virginia**

**Virginia Cave Board Members Present**

Mr. Tom Lera, Chairman  
Dr. David C. Culver  
Mr. Andrew Harrison  
Dr. John R. Holsinger  
Ms. Babs Melton  
Ms. Judy Molnar  
Ms. Barbara L. Moss  
Mr. Jesse Richardson  
Mr. David Socky  
Mr. Roger Kirchen, Virginia Department of Historical Resources

**Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present**

Ms. Claire Ward

**DCR Staff Present**

Mr. Joey Fagan  
Mr. Larry Smith  
Mr. Wil Orndorff

**Others Present**

Mr. Rod Graves  
Mr. Rick Lambert  
Mr. Gary Moss

**Call to Order**

Mr. Tom Lera called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

**Introduction and Announcements**

Mr. Lera welcomed members, staff, and guests.

### **Minutes from September 22, 2007**

MOTION: Ms. Barbara Moss moved that the minutes of the March 24, 2007 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as corrected.

SECOND: Mr. David Socky seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### **Treasury Report**

Mr. Larry Smith presented the treasury report, noting expenses associated with the recent Cave Board Retreat and Cave Conservation Partners Meeting and with the publication and distribution of the Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter.

Mr. Lera has sent a letter of thanks to the Richmond Area Speleological Society for their \$1000 grant to the Cave Board in support of the Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter.

### **Election of Vice Chairman**

Mr. Lera announced the recent resignation of Cave Board Vice Chairman, Ms. Andrea Futrell, from the Board. It is anticipated that the Governor will fill the vacancy on the Cave Board in the near future. The Chair opened the floor for nominations to fill the position of Vice Chairman of the Board. Dr. David Culver nominated Mr. David Socky. There were no other nominations.

The Board unanimously approved Mr. Socky to serve as Vice Chairman of the Virginia Cave Board.

## **Old Business**

### **Education and Outreach Committee**

Ms. Barbara Moss, chairman of the Education and Outreach Committee, reported on plans for 2008 Virginia Cave Week to be observed during the week April 20 to 26, 2008 in conjunction with Earth Day (on April 22). Work is ongoing to produce an informational poster about karst resources. The poster will be a two-sided 11x17 poster with a full color front side with images and an informative text intensive reverse side. Mr. Rod Graves of Luray Caverns agreed to help with the project.

Mr. Fagan reported that the current draft of the Virginia Outdoors Plan recommends establishment of a Virginia Karst Trail. The Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society first proposed the project. According to the Virginia Outdoors

Plan, this thematic trail will promote resource management goals and best management practices that help landowners protect sensitive karst resources such as caves, springs, and sinkholes. The trail will focus on above ground features and tourist caves throughout the state's valley and ridge physiographic province as well as the Grafton karst, Chuckatuck karst, and the Yorktown geologic formation on the Peninsula. Ms. Babs Melton suggested the trail be named the "Virginia Karst Discovery Trail."

Mr. Graves reported that Luray Caverns has plans to build an informational kiosk. A portion of the display will be permanently devoted to cave conservation and karst environmental education topics.

Mr. Jesse Richardson reported that a successful Growing Communities on Karst workshop was held at Shepherdstown, West Virginia on September 12 and 13, 2007. Mr. Richardson plans to attend the American Planning Association 2008 National Planning Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada from April 27 to May 1, 2008 where he will present a Growing Communities on Karst workshop.

Mr. Richardson announced the Eleventh Multidisciplinary Conference on Sinkholes and the Engineering and Environmental Impacts of Karst will be held September 22 – 26, 2008 at Tallahassee, Florida.

Mr. Richardson announced that the Second Appalachian Karst Symposium would be held May 7 – 10, 2008 at East Tennessee State University at Johnson City, Tennessee.

### **Joint Technical Committee**

Chairman Lera appointed Mr. Andrew Harrison to serve as the chairman of the Joint Technical Committee.

Mr. David Socky reported on a proposed 82-lot development on 238 acres in Botetourt County near Perry's Saltpetre Cave, a significant cave in Botetourt County. Mr. Wil Orndorff noted that there are issues with the proposed subdivision regarding shallow soils that may render many of the proposed lots unsuitable for conventional septic systems. Mr. Orndorff will report back to the Board regarding actions being taken by the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors regarding the proposed subdivision.

Mr. Lera reported that the Stormwater Management Regulation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has responded to the letter sent earlier by the Virginia Cave Board regarding the proposed new stormwater regulations. Changes were made to better address karst-related issues in the proposed new stormwater regulations. Tom Lera will write a letter to the TAC expressing appreciation for their consideration of the Cave Board's comments and for taking action to better address karst-related stormwater issues in the proposed new regulations.

Mr. Andrew Harrison reported on the current lack of specific guidelines for underground storage tanks (USTs) in karst areas in Virginia. Mr. Harrison has prepared a presentation

on the issue of USTs in karst. He suggested the Cave Board should contact the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in order to start a dialog between the Board and the DEQ Groundwater Steering Committee. (See related entry under Underground Storage Tank Guidelines for Karst).

Mr. Lera reported that he, Ms. Moss, Mr. Moss, and Mr. Fagan attended the U.S. Forest Service sponsored "Cave Conservation Café" on October 23, 2007 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, DC.

### **Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Karst Program**

Mr. Orndorff reported that the DCR Karst Program work to develop conservation sites for designated significant caves in Virginia will be completed in the December 2007 – January 2008 timeframe.

During September and October 2007, the DCR Karst Program worked with the U.S. Forest Service and other state and federal agencies and organizations in repairing two bat friendly cave gates on Rocky Hollow and Kelly Caves and to build a new bat friendly cave gate on Arbogast Saltpetre Cave.

The DCR Karst Program continues to be involved in matters regarding cave and karst resources in the Nature Conservancy's ongoing conservation planning process. This topic is relevant to discussions held at the September 22, 2007 Cave Board retreat between the Board and cave conservation partners regarding how criteria for significance are ranked and prioritized to best target efforts to protect biological resources in caves and karst (see related item below under Significant Caves at Risk).

Recent DCR Karst Program inventory and protection work has been performed in Mill Creek Cave, Brother Dave's Cave, and Unthanks Cave.

Mr. Joey Fagan reported on the work by the DCR Division of Natural Heritage and other DCR divisions in support of the New River Valley Planning District Commission (NRVPDC) Green Infrastructure Initiative. Green infrastructure planning is a process for inventorying and mapping natural assets and devising strategies for protecting them. It seeks to guide development to more appropriate locations by identifying areas that should be protected before development begins. A green infrastructure plan might identify areas to be set aside for ground water recharge or species protection, while also identifying areas for locating buildings or other human uses that are less sensitive to development impacts. The DCR Division of Natural Heritage has developed the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment as a set of tools for efforts such as the one being undertaken by the NRVPDC.

Mr. Larry Smith presented an update on planned additions to the Virginia Natural Area Preserve (NAP) System. It is anticipated that the 110-acre Ogden's Cave property will soon be transferred from The Nature Conservancy to DCR. Twenty-four caver volunteers are performing a clean up of the property in advance of the property transfer.

Other properties containing cave and karst resources in other parts of the state are being considered for eventual addition to the NAP System.

### **Rocky Hollow Cave**

Mr. Lera reported that the court case prosecuting the vandalism of Rocky Hollow Cave under the Virginia Cave Protection Act has been continued until June 30, 2008 to enable the planned clean-up and mitigation work to be scheduled at a time less likely to cause adverse impacts to the cave's bat population.

### **Caves on VDOT Rights of Way**

Mr. Rick Lambert reported that the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS) is working in partnership with VDOT to reopen and enable access to Billy Williams Cave in Highland County. If efforts to open the cave are successful, the cave will be gated. The cave was previously closed by highway construction in 1931.

### **Underground Storage Tank Guidelines for Karst**

Mr. Harrison noted that there are currently no procedures specific to karst to assess and mitigate underground storage tank (UST) leaks. Mr. Richardson will perform a search for laws addressing USTs in karst in other states on Westlaw. Mr. Harrison and Mr. Richardson will continue to work on the UST in karst issue and will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

### **Virginia Speleological Survey List of Significant Caves**

Mr. Socky reported that, at the direction of Virginia Cave Board, the Virginia Speleological Survey has developed and maintains a list of significant caves in Virginia for the Board. With the recent addition of several caves to the list, the significant cave list currently contains 377 caves – or about 8.6% of the Commonwealth's 4378 known caves. Mr. Socky described the multiple significance criteria used to qualify caves for inclusion on the list. Nominations for caves to be added to the list are continuously being accepted.

MOTION: Dr. David Culver moved that the Virginia Cave Board accept the current Virginia Speleological Survey List of Virginia Significant Caves.

SECOND: Mr. David Socky seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### **Other Old Business**

### **Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter**

Mr. Lera reported the next issue of the Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter would be published in March 2007, maintaining a schedule of two issues a year. It was pointed out that many copies of the June 2007 newsletter were returned due to invalid addresses. An effort will be made to help VSS to update its list of addresses of cave owners with priority being given to updating the records for Virginia's 377 significant caves.

### **Virginia Cave Board Website**

Ms. Moss is tasked with overseeing updates and maintenance of the Cave Board website. She will review the website and report back to the Board regarding suggested updates and changes.

### **Show Cave Contacts**

Ms. Judy Molnar reported Grand Caverns replaced 1000 feet of cable along the tourist route in the cave and updated some lighting in the course of repairing damage due to lightning. Caver volunteers from the Virginia Region (VAR) of the National Speleological Society are working to better conceal the wiring in the show cave. The October 2007 issue of Virginia Wildlife contained an article on the Living South River learning stations and exhibits at Grand Caverns.

### **New Business**

#### **Cave Conservation Partners**

On September 22, 2007, representatives from the Virginia Cave Board, the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias, The Cave Conservancy Foundation, the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society, The Appalachian Cave Conservancy, the American Cave Conservation Association, the Virginia Speleological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DCR Division of Parks, and the DCR Division of Natural Heritage met at Natural Tunnel State Park for a discussion dubbed the "Cave Conservation Partners Roundtable." The partners expressed an interest in continuing communications and working together to advance the organizations' shared goals for protecting caves and conserving karst resources.

#### **Significant Caves at Risk**

A committee was established at the Cave Conservation Partners meeting whose task is to better define how criteria for significance are ranked and prioritized in order to better target efforts to protect biological resources in caves and karst. The Significant Caves at Risk Committee is composed of Bill Balfour, Bob Van Gundy, Claiborne Woodall, and Charles Maus. Wil Orndorff will act in an advisory capacity to the committee and will supply information as needed.

### **Virginia Karst Trail**

A Virginia Karst Trail and Education Field Trip Committee was established at the Cave Conservation Partners meeting whose members are Joey Fagan, Chris Hobson, John Taylor, Bill Balfour, Megan Krager, Judy Molnar, and Carol Zokaites (see related item under Education Committee Report).

### **Liability Protection for Landowners**

In response to questions raised at the Cave Conservation Partners meeting, Mr. Tom Lera noted that in addition to the protection from liability for cave owners afforded through the Virginia Cave Protection Act, additional general liability protection is likely afforded through the section 29.1-506 of the Code of Virginia. Mr. Lera will report further details in an article to be published in the CONL.

### **Cave Board Nominations**

Mr. Smith announced that nominations are being sought to fill the recent vacancy on the Cave Board.

### **Passing of Lyall Steger**

Dr. John Holsinger announced that Lyall O. Steger Jr., owner of Madison's Saltpetre Cave, passed away on October 10, 2007. Dr. Holsinger has sent a letter of condolence to the Steger family on behalf of the Cave Board.

### **Thanks to Luray Caverns for Hosting Meeting**

Mr. Lera expressed thanks to Luray Caverns on behalf of the Cave Board for hosting the meeting. Mr. Rod Graves of Luray Caverns welcomed the Board and invited the Board and their guests to tour the caverns following the meeting.

### **Dates for Future Cave Board Activities**

- Meeting: March 15, 2008 at Richmond, Virginia
- Meeting: June 14, 2008 at Crystal Caverns at Strasburg, Virginia

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Lera adjourned the meeting at 3:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Thomas Lera  
Board Chairman

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Joseph H. Fagan  
Secretary